

VZCZCXRO0629
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #0218/01 0331023
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 021023Z FEB 09
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4001
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEADWD/DA WASHINGTON DC//DAS-ZD/DACS-ZK//
RUEAHQA/CSAF WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//
RHMFIUU/CMC WASHINGTON DC
RUENAAA/CNO WASHINGTON DC//POLAD//
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 7521
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4506
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4354
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 5848
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 4270
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2842

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 JERUSALEM 000218

SIPDIS

STATE PASS BBG
STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR ABRAMS
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/02): PALESTINIAN ALARM OVER
JERUSALEM AREA SETTLEMENTS

Main Stories:

Al Quds leads with Israeli plans to build 3,500 new housing units on the "E1 block" between Jerusalem and the Ma'ale Adumim Jerusalem area settlement, "despite Israeli promises to the U.S." The story receives front page coverage in all papers, which highlight that the new settlement would seal off Jerusalem from the West Bank. The papers also report that Israel has declared the conclusion of infrastructure projects to allow for the E1 settlement plan to move forward. The papers also front page statements by the PLO calling on President Obama to take immediate action to stop the planned settlement activities.

Al Ayyam leads with February 1 Israeli strikes on Gaza and statements made by Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, threatening a, "disproportionate Israeli response," to Palestinian rocket attacks, after rocket fire from Gaza injured three Israelis on February 1. The story receives front page coverage in all papers, which also run a statement issued by Fatah, denying responsibility for the rocket fire and stating that Fatah is focused on reestablishing Palestinian national unity. Al Quds adds that one Palestinian died of injuries sustained in a previous Israeli strike on Gaza.

Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with a story which appears on the front pages of all dailies, quoting Palestinian Authority President Abbas rejecting talks with those [Hamas] who reject the authority of the PLO. The papers further note that the PLO's legislative body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), will meet on February 3 in Ramallah to discuss Hamas' calls for establishing a substitute body for the PLO. The news follows weekend coverage of a January 31 emergency PNC meeting in Amman, at which the body condemned Hamas leader Misha'al's call for a substitute body. Coverage also noted Hamas leaders' Hamad and Al Shair rejecting Misha'al's call.

In U.S. policy news, Al Quds' front page cites AFP in reporting that

advisors to President Obama have begun dialogue "behind the scenes" with officials in both Iran and Syria. Another AFP story runs inside Al Hayat Al Jadida and Al Ayyam about Obama replying to a letter he received from the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, congratulating Obama on his inauguration. In his written reply, Obama expressed interest in working with the Islamic organization for a "safer world," according to reporting. In a third inside story, Al Hayat Al Jadida cites AFP, in reporting on differences between President Obama and Secretary of Defense Gates in regards to nuclear weapons. Obama seeks a world free of nuclear arms, while Gates seeks to modernize the U.S nuclear arsenal, according to AFP. Finally, Al Quds runs an inside story citing Aviation Week Magazine about the U.S. preventing Israel from boarding an Iranian ship destined for Gaza with arms for Hamas.

Al Quds and Al Ayyam front page an AFP story on statements made by Turkish President Gul in Saudi Arabia on February 1, calling on Hamas to engage in the peace process. Gul is also quoted "understanding" the need for Palestinian unity and the need for Hamas to be part of the regional peace process. In related news, Al Quds carries on an inside page, a Washington Post interview with Turkish Premier Erdogan, following an incident at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he left the stage in protest of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians. Erdogan is quoted describing Palestine as a "big prison" and claiming that the current Israeli government does not deal with Turkey in a rational way. The three papers run front page coverage of the collapse of an UNRWA school classroom floor located near the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, suggesting it was caused by the controversial Israeli excavations near the mosque. 17 girls were injured when the floor collapsed,

JERUSALEM 00000218 002.2 OF 004

reporting notes.

Al Quds' front page cites AFP in quoting Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki calling for the lifting of the Gaza "siege" and reconstruction of Gaza under the, "legitimate Hamas government." His statements were made on February 1 while receiving Hamas Political Chief Khalid Misha'al in Tehran. Al Quds' front page runs a second AFP story on differences between the Israeli Defense Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Livni on Egypt's role in any truce agreement with Hamas. The paper further reports that a Hamas delegation will arrive in Cairo on February 2 to convey Hamas' response to the Egyptian truce proposal.-----

WEEKEND NEWS:

Sunday, February 1

Front page coverage of Special Envoy's Mitchell's visit to the region continued: All papers reported that Jordan's King Abdullah warned Mitchell against initiating a "new peace process" and called instead for the re-launch of "effective" Israeli-Palestinian negotiations based on the two-state solution. Papers noted that during the King's January 31 meeting with Mitchell, Abdullah commended the positive tone set by the new American administration towards achieving regional peace and building relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds based on mutual interest and respect. For his part, Mitchell stated that the American administration is prioritizing Middle East issues and is serious about resuming Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations to reach a two-state solution, according to reporting. Finally, Al Quds' coverage made mention of the January 30 Washington Post editorial noting that the Obama administration seems "to tend towards" following Mitchell's recommendations from his 2001 report.

Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages covered Middle East Envoy Tony Blair's January 31 remarks that Hamas should participate, in some form, under certain conditions, in the Middle East peace process. Blair noted that the policy of isolating Hamas has not yielded results. Papers also highlight Blair's comment that the designation of George Mitchell as Special Envoy for Middle East Peace is evidence of strong U.S. commitment to the process. Meanwhile, reporting also noted that Hamas has responded to the Quartet requirement that Hamas renounce violence and recognize Israel as, "ridiculous."

All front pages highlighted that Palestinian Authority President Abbas postponed his visit to the Czech Republic, upon "surprise developments" and traveled to Cairo for follow-up talks on the Gaza truce and reconciliation efforts with Palestinian factions. The

papers also reported that Egypt expects Palestinian factions to deliver their responses to the proposed Gaza truce and Palestinian reconciliation this week. Coverage continued that Abbas will meet with French President Sarkozy on February 2 in Paris to discuss conditions in the Palestinian Territories, means of consolidating the Gaza ceasefire, and Gaza reconstruction efforts.

Saturday, January 31

All front pages reported that Special Envoy Mitchell announced that the United States is committed to working towards a permanent peace between Israel, the Palestinians and all Arab countries. Al Quds led coverage with a photo of Mitchell and U.N. officials at the UNRWA warehouse. The papers ran extensive excerpts from Mitchell's January 30 statement, delivered at the UNRWA warehouse in Jerusalem. Papers noted that the "pessimistic assessment" by Mitchell came after two days of discussions with Israeli and Palestinian officials regarding the consolidation of a fragile ceasefire in Gaza. Mitchell's announcement that, "President Obama has ordered this week the allocation of a total amount of \$20.3 million," in assistance to

JERUSALEM 00000218 003 OF 004

Gaza, was also highlighted in all dailies.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida ran front page headlines quoting U.S. Ambassador to the UN Rice calling on Israel to launch its own investigation into possible violations of international law committed by its military during recent operations in the Gaza Strip. Rice added in her first address to the Security Council that Hamas, too, has violated international law with rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and the use of civilian structures as shields for its terrorist attacks. Rice also told the Security Council that several accusations against Israel were simply inflammatory.

Al Quds' front page cited a report published by Israeli daily Haaretz regarding settlement activities. Haaretz covered a detailed report prepared by the Israeli security agency on, "illegal construction inside settlements," which reveals that construction in most settlements is conducted without the required permits or in a manner that violates permit stipulations. The report also revealed that buildings and infrastructure such as roads, synagogues, schools, religious schools, and police stations- in more than 30 settlements- were established on privately-owned Palestinian land. The report was prepared by the Israeli authorities to provide documented and reliable information in preparation for lawsuits that are expected to be filed by Palestinians, human rights organizations, and Israeli left-wing groups against settlement activities, according to reporting.

All front pages ran headlines of Palestinian Abbas January 30 statements noting, "Our terms of reference for peace are the Arab peace initiative, UN resolutions, and President Bush's vision. The coup in Gaza will not be repeated in the West Bank and efforts to destroy the PLO will not succeed." Abbas added that, "if Israel wants peace, it could be reached and implemented in a short period of time by allowing our people to regain their lands, ending the occupation, solving the question of refugees, and establishing East Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Palestine." Abbas also noted that the Hamas coup in Gaza only succeeded, "because we did not want armed confrontations." Abbas dismissed recent comments by Hamas leader in Damascus Khalid Misha'al about replacing the PLO, stating, "Misha'al will not be able to destroy this entity because no one will support him, neither the Palestinians nor others."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Al Aqsa [mosque]... and settlements!!"(02/02): "The collapse of a classroom floor at an UNRWA school near the Al Aqsa mosque and the injury of 17 female students due to ongoing Israeli excavations under and around the Jerusalem sanctuary, highlights once again the dangers of these excavations that threaten the Al Aqsa mosque on the one hand, and nearby Palestinian houses and organizations on the other... [These excavations] threaten... [to cause] a catastrophe if Israel does not immediately stop these excavations, and if the international

community does not intervene to stop these illegitimate practices carried out by an occupying power in territories considered by the international community as occupied..."

2) Khalid Hroub writes in Al Ayyam under the title, "Yes to ending division and occupation"(02/02): "Fatah should provide a new strategic vision and a political platform based on evaluating negotiations from the past 15 years, its loss in elections and Hamas' rise and electoral victory, control over Gaza and results of the recent war... Hamas,too, should put forward a new strategic

JERUSALEM 00000218 004 OF 004

vision and political program based on evaluating the resistance of the last 20 years... Hamas could adopt a political program... that is based on the goal of, "ending occupation with all means," which could provide a common meeting point for policy with Fatah.
WALLES